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COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL
USES OF OUTER SPACE

REPORT OF THE INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON OUTER SPACE ACTIVITIES

(United Nations Office at Vienna, 2 and 3 June 1998)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities held its nineteenth session at the United Nations Office at Vienna on 2 and 3 June 1998. V. Kozharnovich of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) was elected Chairman. The list of participants is attached as annex II to the present report.

2. The Deputy to the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna opened the Meeting, informing it of the Secretary-General's proposals for reform, in particular those relating to inter-agency coordination of space activities within the United Nations system and of the current work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. He emphasized that due consideration should be given to the effective utilization of space technology and its applications in strengthening inter-agency efforts for sustainable development, especially in connection with the protection of the global environment, natural disaster reduction and the sustainable management of oceans and marine resources, on which recent international efforts had been focused. He also stressed that the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), to be convened from 19 to 30 July 1999, provided the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities with an important opportunity to suggest concrete actions to be taken at the inter-agency level to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in promoting the international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

3. The Meeting adopted the agenda contained in annex III to the present report.

I. SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS CONSIDERED AT THE MEETING

A. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical applications of space technology and related areas (agenda item 4)

1. Discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of the actual activities of United Nations organizations in the area of space science and technology and its applications as they relate to their mandated programmes (agenda item 4 (a))

4. The Chief of the Committee Servicing and Research Section of the Office for Outer Space Affairs briefed the Meeting on the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its two subcommittees during the period 1997-1998, emphasizing the progress made on the priority items on their agendas and on other matters of inter-agency interest. He also informed the Meeting that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, through its Working Group of the Whole, had concluded the evaluation of the implementation of the

recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82), held at Vienna from 9 to 21 August 1982.

5. The Expert on Space Applications informed the Meeting that the regional centre for space science and technology education for Asia and the Pacific had started the fourth course on satellite meteorology and global climate in March 1998 and that similar centres in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Africa would commence their work by the end of 1998. The Meeting noted the ongoing international efforts to establish a network of space science and technology education and research institutions for central and south-eastern European countries. The Meeting was informed of the progress on the cooperative information network linking scientists, educators, professionals and decision makers in Africa (COPINE). The Meeting also took note of the current status of the project for disaster prevention, mitigation and relief, which had originally been proposed by the Office at the seventeenth session of the Meeting as an inter-agency space applications project.

6. The representatives of the organizations reported on their current activities and plans for 1998, 1999 and beyond. An exchange of views followed regarding how best to coordinate future activities.

7. The Meeting agreed that space technology provided essential tools to assist in advancing the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, and the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as food security and agriculture development, and noted that inter-agency efforts could be further strengthened toward that goal.

8. The Meeting concluded that efforts should continue to be focused on the identification of areas where the interests of different agencies coincided and where coordinated action could be undertaken.

9. The Meeting noted with appreciation the strong emphasis placed by the General Assembly, in its resolution 52/56 of 10 December 1997, and by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on cooperation between organizations of the United Nations system and agreed to keep the Committee informed of the progress made in those activities.

10. The Meeting further stressed the importance of continued cooperation and coordination among the organizations of the United Nations system that were pursuing activities relating to outer space and that were represented at the Meeting.

2. Consideration of matters to be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the programme of work of United Nations organizations (agenda item 4 (b))

11. The Meeting had before it the draft annual report of the Secretary-General entitled "Coordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system: programme of work for 1998, 1999 and future years". It was the twenty-third report on the subject to be prepared and contained information from organizations of the United Nations system in an integrated form, outlining planned activities by field of application.

12. The Meeting noted that, in accordance with the agreement reached during its annual session in 1984 (ACC/1984/PG/8, para. 13), the draft report currently consisted of two major sections: one containing a summary of major planned activities and programmes, without reference to the organizations concerned, and the other containing a description of the future programmes of the individual organizations concerned.

13. The draft report contained information on activities and programmes involving the applications of space technology in the fields of remote sensing and geographic information systems (GIS), communications and navigation, meteorology and hydrology, basic space science, safety aspects and natural disaster reduction and

other related fields. It highlighted activities carried out jointly by the organizations concerned through cooperative programmes and included those carried out separately within their areas of competence. For the above-mentioned fields, those activities included education and training courses, workshops, seminars and fellowships; expert services and survey missions to the countries concerned and the conducting of studies on pilot projects or the implementation of projects with operational applications of technology; and the dissemination or exchange of information on the status of technology or operational systems.

14. The Meeting reviewed the draft report and made suggestions and comments. The Meeting adopted the report as amended. The Meeting was informed that the final text would be made available to States members of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in document A/AC.105/700 during the forty-first session of the Committee, to be held from 3 to 12 June 1998.

15. The Meeting recalled its agreement at the eighteenth session that at its session in 1997 consideration should be given to the possibility of recategorizing space-related activities to better reflect, in the annual report of the Secretary-General on the programme of work of the United Nations organizations, the priority areas of application being identified by Member States, including consideration of the possibility of creating a new section that would include an analytical review of the results of the coordination of activities conducted.

B. Inter-agency coordination in matters relating to the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) (agenda item 5)

16. The Meeting noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 52/56, had agreed that UNISPACE III should be convened at the United Nations Office at Vienna from 19 to 30 July 1999 as a special session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, open to all States Members of the United Nations. The Assembly had also encouraged all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as space-related industries, to contribute actively to achieving the objectives of UNISPACE III, and had requested the Preparatory and Advisory Committees as well as the executive secretariat for UNISPACE III to carry out their tasks in accordance with the recommendations made by the Preparatory Committee at its 1997 session. The Meeting also noted that the theme of UNISPACE III would be "Space benefits for humanity in the twenty-first century", as suggested by the Meeting at its eighteenth session.

17. The Meeting was informed of the progress made in the preparatory work for UNISPACE III by the Advisory Committee at its 1998 session. It had before it the report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its 1997 session (A/AC.105/697 and Corr.1), which contained the recommendations of the Advisory Committee concerning the preparation of the draft report of UNISPACE III and the organization of the Conference, including the participation of international organizations and industry. The Meeting also noted that the Preparatory Committee at its 1998 session would conduct a paragraph-by-paragraph consideration of the first full text of the draft report of UNISPACE III, which had been prepared by the executive secretariat based on the comments made by the Advisory Committee at its 1998 session, and that the draft report would include the recommendations and plan of action to be adopted at the Conference.

18. The Meeting noted that the Preparatory Committee would be provided with an updated list of workshops to be organized by interested organizations. The Meeting also noted that organizations of the United Nations system interested in participating in the organization of the space exhibition at the Conference site would be offered space to set up booths free of charge. Some organizations indicated their interest in helping organize proposed workshops and seminars. Those organizations requested further information from the Office for Outer Space Affairs, such as the schedule of workshops, in order to confirm their participation. The Meeting recommended that concerned agencies take necessary early actions to prepare for the workshops and seminars.

19. The Meeting recalled the agreement reached at its eighteenth session to recommend that particular attention be given to enhancing the use of space-based information and communications technology to strengthen operational global observing systems in order to enable them to become more effective for the twenty-first century and to promoting a wider use of space technologies in the prevention and mitigation of the effects of natural and technological disasters and in the provision of relief, as well as to monitoring environmental change at the global level.

20. The Meeting noted that the Office for Outer Space Affairs had prepared background papers (A/CONF.184/BP/1-12) to cover the substantive agenda items of UNISPACE III and that all the background papers would be distributed by August 1998. The Meeting was also informed by the Expert on Space Applications that, following the Regional Preparatory Conference in Asia and the Pacific, which had been held at Kuala Lumpur from 18 to 22 May 1998, the regional preparatory meetings for UNISPACE III in the regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Eastern Europe would be held in Chile in October 1998, in Morocco in October 1998 and in Romania in January 1999, respectively, within the framework of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications. The Meeting also noted that the Office for Outer Space Affairs had invited all the organizations of the United Nations system to indicate their interest in participating in the regional preparatory meetings.

21. The representatives of the organizations expressed the interest of their organizations in contributing to the work of UNISPACE III. The Meeting noted the conferences to be organized by organizations prior to UNISPACE III, such as the Conference on Global Connectivity for Africa, to be held in Ethiopia in June 1998, the Conference on Early Warning Systems for the Reduction of Natural Disasters, to be held in Germany in September 1998, and the World Science Conference, to be held in Hungary in June 1999, could provide valuable inputs to the work of UNISPACE III.

22. The Meeting agreed that UNISPACE III provided a unique opportunity for the organizations of the United Nations system to make greater use of space technology and its applications in fulfilling their mandates and to coordinate activities further, with particular focus on those which would be included in the plan of action of the Conference. The Meeting also agreed to submit to the Preparatory Committee at its 1998 session the collective views of the Meeting concerning the priority areas in which organizations within the United Nations system, jointly or individually, would strengthen their efforts to promote the utilization of space technology and its applications to assist in solving problems of global or regional significance. Those collective views of the Meeting are reflected in annex I to the present report.

23. The Meeting requested the Office for Outer Space Affairs to convey to the Preparatory Committee the willingness and intention of the organizations of the United Nations system to contribute, individually and collectively, to the attainment of the objectives of UNISPACE III.

C. In-depth review of the cooperation of United Nations organizations in remote-sensing and related GIS activities: remote-sensing data policy for requirements of the organizations of the United Nations system and implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21 (agenda item 6)

24. Under agenda item 6, the Meeting considered a number of issues, including a brief evaluation of activities supported in developing countries by organizations of the United Nations system. Issues addressed in that context included conferences, workshops and seminars on the applications of new and advanced systems; training and education programmes; institution-building; project formulation and execution; exchange of information; and other areas of inter-agency cooperation.

25. The Meeting noted that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-fifth session, in 1998, had emphasized the importance of making remote sensing data and analysed information openly available to all

countries at reasonable cost and in a timely manner and had recognized the example of international cooperation in the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in the exchange of meteorological data as provided for in resolution 40 adopted at the XIIth WMO Congress on 21 June 1995 (A/AC.105/697 and Corr.1, para. 62). The Meeting also noted that the Subcommittee had once again stressed the need for the international community to utilize remote sensing data in an effort to implement fully the recommendations contained in Agenda 21,[1] adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992 (A/AC.105/697 and Corr.1, para. 63).

26. The Meeting recalled that, as of September 1995, the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) had commenced the implementation of its new data policy. The Meeting also recalled that it had expressed concern regarding the implementation of the data access policy by EUMETSAT in connection with the activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations related to the African Real-Time Environmental Monitoring using Imaging Satellites.

27. The Meeting recalled that it had requested WMO, the only organization of the United Nations system invited to attend the meetings of the EUMETSAT Council as an observer, to transmit the collective view of the Meeting to the Council. The representative of WMO informed the Meeting that it had presented to the Council the views expressed by the Meeting.

28. The Meeting agreed that, in its deliberations on matters relating to remote sensing, several important points had been identified, in particular in the use of Earth observation data in projects aimed at protecting the environment and at supporting sustainable development. The Meeting stressed the importance of the principle of free and open access to space science and environmental data that were still in the public domain and recommended that such data remain freely available, or available at cost, to Member States.

29. The meeting noted that discussions should continue on those points and other selected issues because, unlike other emerging areas of technology, such as manufacturing in the space environment, the benefits of which were not yet apparent as far as developing countries were concerned, remote sensing was clearly an important tool for those countries.

30. The Meeting agreed that the in-depth review of the cooperation of organizations of the United Nations system in remote sensing and related GIS activities should be continued.

D. Review of progress on the proposed inter-agency space applications project for disaster prevention, mitigation and relief (agenda item 7)

31. The Meeting recalled the proposal submitted to it at its seventeenth session by the Office for Outer Space Affairs regarding an inter-agency space applications project for disaster prevention, mitigation and relief.

32. The Meeting was informed by the Expert on Space Applications that the proposal was now being reformulated for implementation as part of the technical advisory services by the Office to the regions of Asia and the Pacific and the Caribbean, within the framework of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, as a possible follow-up action to UNISPACE III.

E. Enhancement of coordination among the organizations within the United Nations system through the use of advanced information technologies (agenda item 8)

33. The Meeting recalled the proposal presented to it at its eighteenth session by the Office for Outer Space Affairs on the enhancement of coordination of space activities within the United Nations system through the use of advanced information technologies. The Meeting also recalled its agreement that the Office should

proceed to resolve the administrative and technical issues related to phase I of the proposal, during which the Office would establish within its home page a page that would allow a visitor to the home page of the Office to visit the home pages of other organizations with space activities. The Meeting was informed by the Office that phase I of the proposal was being implemented and that the Office was in the process of resolving administrative and technical issues related to that phase to enable its full implementation.

34. Regarding the implementation of phases II and III, namely, the utilization of the Internet and its various services in preparing the annual report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space activities within the United Nations system and in creating an electronic forum for informal inter-agency dialogue on a more frequent basis to enhance further the inter-agency coordination of space applications activities, the Meeting agreed with the Office for Outer Space Affairs that consideration, including the possibility of on-line editing of the Secretary-General's report using Internet services as part of phase II, should be postponed until the year 2000, after UNISPACE III.

II. FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORK

35. The Meeting reiterated the importance of its continuing to meet on an annual basis, in order to ensure better coordination of activities relating to outer space within the United Nations system. The Meeting recalled that various intergovernmental committees, in particular the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, had expressed concern about the duplication of efforts in the work of various organizations of the system. In that connection, the Meeting noted that its own work had helped to allay those concerns and that those committees had commended its work in their recent reports.

36. The Meeting noted that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-fifth session, in 1998, had continued to stress the need to ensure continuous and effective consultations and coordination in the field of outer space activities among organizations within the United Nations system and the avoidance of duplication of activities (A/AC.105/697 and Corr.1, para. 37). In view of the fact that the forty-first session of the Committee would be held immediately following the current session of the Meeting, the Meeting recommended that the present report be brought to the attention of the Committee during its consideration of the report of the Subcommittee on the work of its thirty-fifth session and in particular in connection with its work as Preparatory Committee for UNISPACE III.

37. The Meeting noted that there might be a need for further inter-agency consultation on and coordination of the activities and programmes of the organizations of the United Nations system for the preparations for UNISPACE III, including inputs for a plan of action to be adopted by the Conference, pending recommendations to be made by the Preparatory Committee at its session in 1998 that were relevant to the work of the Meeting. In that connection, the Meeting requested the Office for Outer Space Affairs to inform the organizations of the United Nations system immediately after the session of the Preparatory Committee in 1998 whether there would be a need for the Meeting to hold a session prior to UNISPACE III and to circulate a sharply focused agenda for that session, if that was the case.

38. The Meeting agreed that the work of its session after UNISPACE III should consider the following items:

1. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas:

(a) Discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of the actual activities of United Nations organizations in the area of space science and technology and its applications as they relate to their mandated programmes;

(b) Consideration of matters to be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the programme of work of United Nations organizations.

2. In-depth review of the cooperation of United Nations organizations in remote sensing and related GIS activities: remote sensing data policy for requirements of the organizations of the United Nations system and implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21.

3. Enhancement of coordination among the organizations of the United Nations system through the use of advanced information technologies.

4. Review of the plan of action of UNISPACE III and implementation of follow-up activities.

5. Other matters.

39. The participants agreed that they should continue their in-depth review of cooperation between United Nations organizations in some specific areas of space applications, such as remote sensing, communications, natural disaster reduction, environment monitoring, navigation, meteorology and related technology transfer, education, intellectual property and spin-off benefits, in order to ensure that the activities of the United Nations system in those areas were meaningfully integrated and that the services rendered to Member States fully met their requirements in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

40. The Meeting agreed that the exact date of its session to be held in 2000 should be determined after UNISPACE III.

Notes

[1]*Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.1.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference, resolution I*, annex II.

Annex I

PRIORITY AREAS OF SPACE-RELATED ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE PLAN OF ACTION OF UNISPACE III

1. The Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities recognized that, in the early twenty-first century, there would continue to be increasing stress on the natural resources and the environment because of population expansion and that food security and agricultural development would remain a major concern of the Member States. The Meeting therefore recommended that a special plan of action be developed with focus on integrated uses of space technology applications, including remote sensing satellites, communications satellites and environmental and disaster-monitoring satellites, in order to support Member States in ensuring food security and implementing comprehensive rural development programmes, as follow-ups to the World Food Summit and Agenda 21. Special emphasis should also be placed on promoting utilization of space applications for natural resource management and environmental conservation as well as disaster management in small island developing States and coastal zones.

2. Disaster management has been one of the main issues of global concern and the organizations of the international community have increased their efforts as regards disaster prediction, early warning and mitigation during the 1990s, the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. In 1999, there will be a series of concluding events of the Decade. The conclusion of the Decade within the United Nations system will take place through intergovernmental discussions of issues relating to disaster reduction at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. The Programme Forum, the final event of the Decade, will be held at Geneva in July 1999, to provide the multisectoral and interdisciplinary forum for all partners concerned with the Decade, to formulate a disaster-reduction strategy for the twenty-first century, when a major role off space-based technology may be identified and emphasized in natural hazard assessment and risk management.

3. The protection of the environment is another issue of global significance and the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992, increased public awareness of the importance of the issue. Many organizations of the United Nations system have been participating in the programmes and activities relating to the monitoring of climate change and the environment, and satellite data have been vital for those activities. In that connection, the Meeting once again endorsed the principle of free and open access to space science and environmental data that are considered to be in the public domain and further recommended that such data remain freely available, or available at cost, to all Member States. The Meeting agreed that the trend towards commercialization or privatization and the copyrighting of data originally in the public domain with the aim of establishing for-profit structures for them is contradictory to the principle cited above and would have a negative effect on access to such data and their application for related studies, in particular in developing regions of the world.

I. INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

4. The Meeting identified the following as the priority areas in which organizations of the United Nations system with space-related activities should consolidate their efforts in the utilization of space technology applications:

(a) *Promotion of disaster mitigation, early warning and relief.* Possible joint actions could be considered in the following areas: (i) capacity-building of emergency response offices, including technical advisory services in selecting and setting up space-related capabilities; (ii) supporting the implementation of action plans

and initiatives from other conferences, such as the Third Space Conference of the Americas, held at Punta del Este, Uruguay, in 1996, and the Conference on Early Warning Systems for the Reduction of Natural Disasters, to be held at Potsdam, Germany, in 1998; and (iii) coordinating access to regional/global databases;

(b) *Greater participation and coordination for the Integrated Global Observing Strategy being pursued in the development of the global observing systems (the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS) and the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS).* Inter-agency efforts could be further strengthened to emphasize the important role of space-based observing systems as a part of the jointly sponsored global observing systems (GCOS, GTOS, GOOS), with the participation of space agencies through the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites;

(c) *Contribution to ongoing programmes.* Inter-agency efforts should be strengthened to support ongoing programmes such as International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, the World Climate Research Programme, the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environment and the Famine Early Warning System;

(d) *Addressing problems such as availability and quality of water resources, land degradation, global health, tele-education and telemedicine*;

(e) *Ensuring free, or at cost of production and unrestricted exchange of space-based observing data on the quality of the environment and natural disaster-causing events.* This would highlight the need to provide data from space-based technology that are important to monitoring, assessing and predicting the Earth environment on an unrestricted basis among Member States;

(f) *Enhanced capacity-building to increase the use of space-based technology by developing countries in the area of applications.* This would include a coordinated effort by United Nations agencies to provide technical assistance for supporting the use of space technology with developing countries.

II. SPECIALIZED AGENCY PARTICIPATION

5. This modality would identify specific actions that may be of considerable relevance to the mandates of individual agencies. One such proposal might, for instance, address the African Information Society Initiative, where the actions would include greater coordination with other agencies working in the same region with similar objectives.

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Chairman: V. KOZHARNOVICH (United Nations Industrial Development Organization)
Secretary: S. CAMACHO (United Nations)

United Nations Secretariat

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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction	C. Rose
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Specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	He Changchui
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	R. Missotten
International Telecommunication Union	P. Korobenkov
World Meteorological Organization	R. C. Landis

* * *

International Atomic Energy Agency	C. A. Nogueira de Oliveira

Annex III

AGENDA OF THE NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON OUTER SPACE ACTIVITIES

1. Opening of the Meeting.

2. Election of the Chairman of the Meeting.

3. Adoption of the agenda.

4. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical applications of space technology and related areas:

   (a) Discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of the actual activities of United Nations organizations in the area of space science and technology and its applications as they relate to their mandated programmes:

      (i) United Nations Programme on Space Applications;

      (ii) Programmes of the other organizations;

   (b) Consideration of matters to be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the programme of work of United Nations organizations.

5. Inter-agency coordination in matters relating to the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III).

6. In-depth review of the cooperation of United Nations organizations in remote-sensing and related GIS activities: remote-sensing data policy for requirements of the organizations of the United Nations system and implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21.

7. Review of progress on the proposed inter-agency space applications project for disaster prevention, mitigation and relief.

8. Enhancement of coordination among the organizations within the United Nations system through the use of advanced information technologies.

9. Other matters:

   (a) Future meetings;

   (b) Additional matters.